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Postal Service Shares Tips To Avoid Holiday Scams

"Mailin' It!" podcast guest gives advice for identifying suspicious postage, delivery messages and charitable appeals

WASHINGTON — The United States Postal Service is sharing tips to help customers avoid scams this holiday season.

"Mailin' It!," the agency's official podcast, drops its latest episode today, featuring advice on counterfeit postage, brushing and imposter scams, phone charities and mail theft.

As part of its 2026 holiday safety campaign, "Don't Get Hit by Holiday Crime," the U.S. Postal Inspection Service emphasizes that because the holidays are the busiest time of year, unfortunately, they're also an opportunity for scammers who count on people's generosity — and distraction — during the festive season.

According to a 2026 *AARP survey*, 84 percent of U.S. consumers experienced or were targeted by at least one form of fraud during the holidays, from online shopping scams to fake messages about delivery problems.

These are some red flags to look out for:

- **Counterfeit stamps** are offered online at 20 to 50 percent below face value and are often sold in bulk through social media, online marketplaces and third-party vendors. Customers should buy stamps directly from Post Office locations, *usps.com*, or an approved postal provider or local retailer using the *USPS location finder*.

- **Brushing scams** involve unordered packages sent to an unwitting recipient so sellers can post fake reviews online. This "gift" makes it seem as if the products reviewed have verified purchases. The recipient is left confused about where the package came from and what it is. Recipients can keep, dispose of or donate these items.

- **Imposter scams** can reach victims through voice phishing, known as "vishing," or text phishing, known as "smishing." Voice cloning and automated calls can sound like a real or familiar person making unexpected requests for money or to access personal account information. Don't answer unfamiliar phone numbers and verify the request by contacting the source of a known number. Don't use any number provided as a link in a text message. Don't click on links or provide personal information in response to text messages that claim to come from USPS.

- **Charity scammers** can pose as legitimate, recognizable organizations that misleadingly send donors to a fake website. Be on the lookout for websites that are one letter or a word off from a legitimate organization. Don't respond to suspicious emails and phone calls and watch out for requests that press to donate immediately. When making a charitable donation, don't send cash through the mail; make checks payable to the organization, not an individual.

- **Mail theft** can be prevented by not letting packages sit on a porch or in a mailbox for an extended period or overnight. Customers are advised to use delivery lockers or ask a trusted neighbor to bring their packages inside. *Informed Delivery* is a free service that allows customers to preview their incoming letter-size mail and manage their package deliveries. *USPS Hold Mail* is a service offered by Post Offices for holding mail for a minimum of three days up to a maximum of 30 days.

"If you're uncertain about unexpected requests for money or personal information, pause before you do anything," says U.S. Postal Inspector Nick Moore, who is interviewed on the podcast. "Stay vigilant and review our prevention tips so you don't get hit by holiday crime."

The Postal Inspection Service is offering a new system for consumers to report these crimes. Counterfeit stamp and postage fraud or revenue fraud schemes can be reported through uspis.gov/report using the new *Counterfeit Postage Reporting System*.

The latest episode of "Mailin' It!" is available on most podcast platforms and *youtube.com/usps*. The Postal Service's official podcast began in fall 2021 to offer listeners a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the many facets of USPS. Podcast episodes spotlight postal history, USPS products and services, and case reviews from the Postal Inspection Service.

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Please Note: The United States Postal Service is an independent federal establishment, mandated to be self-financing and to serve every American community through the affordable, reliable and secure delivery of mail and packages to more than 172 million addresses six and often seven days a week. Overseen by a bipartisan Board of Governors, the Postal Service is currently pursuing a transformation plan aimed at restoring long-term financial sustainability, improving service, and maintaining the organization as one of America's most valued and trusted brands.

The Postal Service generally receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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